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THE SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSONS.

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MAY 9, SOWING AND REAPING. John IV., 27-42.

This Lesson, along with the one preceding it, brings to view several important items of connection between the Old and the New Testaments. First and most prominent among these is the whole subject of the Samaritan schism. We have in this chapter, and elsewhere in the New Testament, a very distinct picture of the relations existing between the Jews and the Samaritans in the time of Jesus. How did these relations originate? In other words, how did the Samaritans come to be the people they were? Two elements enter into the answer of this question, one or the other of which is apt to be neglected, in the answers that are commonly given.

First, Sargon and the Assyrian kings who followed him largely repopled the regions around Samaria with inhabitants who were not Israelite in race or religion, but who superstitiously adopted something of the worship of Jehovah, as the local god of the region, in addition to the religion they brought with them from their former seats (2 Kgs. xvii., etc.). They had a centre of worship for Jehovah, in Bethel (xvii., 28). When the Jews returned from the exile under Zerubbabel and Jeshua, being in high favor with the Persian king, these Samaritan worshippers of Jehovah were disposed to make common cause with them, and be regarded as of the same religion. When the Jews refused their overtures, they became hostile. This state of things seems to have been kept up through the century and more that intervened between the first year of Cyrus and the close of the twelve years of the first administration of Nehemiah.

But there was a second element, without which these people would never have become the Samaritans of the New Testament. The Books of Ezra and Nehemiah disclose the existence of sharp differences of opinion and practice among the Jews who returned to Jerusalem from the exile, and their descendants. On the one hand, large numbers were disposed to intermarry and affiliate with their Samaritan, Moabite and Ammonite neighbors; and on the other hand, Ezra and Nehemiah and those who held with them were determined to break up these practices, and to preserve Israel separate from the other peoples. Among their opponents were men of high rank, including priests and Levites; even Eliashib the high priest was implicated. The last verses of Nehemiah indicate that this contest reached its crisis while Nehemiah was yet governor. One of the grandsons or great-grandsons of Eliashib married a girl of the family of Sanballat, and Nehemiah banished him. The Bible does not tell us what became of him, but we shall presently find reason for holding that he became high-priest at Mount Gerizim, and that, with his banishment, the contest between the two parties at Jerusalem virtually, at least, became a schism; those who sided against Nehemiah drawing off, becoming permanently affiliated with the people of Samaria, modifying their Judaism accordingly, and thus producing the new form of religion known as Samaritanism. It may have taken a generation or more for the new movement to assume its distinctive form.

Josephus says that a great-grandson of Eliashib, Manasseh by name, married the daughter of Sanballat, and was therefor excluded from the high-priesthood. He does not mention that Nehemiah had anything to do with it, but so far, his account agrees very well with that in the Bible. Nehemiah belonged to the same generation with the sons or the grandsons of Eliashib, and may easily have lived to see the marriage of Eliashib's great-grandson. Josephus further says that the temple at Gerizim, where Manasseh became high-priest, was built by the order of Alexander the Great, after the year 331 B. C. Even this does not contradict the biblical account, on the supposition that Manasseh was the young man whom Nehemiah banished; though if it be true, it shows that he must have become quite an old man before he attained to the object of his ambition. Josephus further says, however, that the Gerizim temple was built at the request of Sanballat. Either this is a mistake, or there was a second Sanballat, for the Sanballat of Nehemiah must have died long before this. But there is no reason for disputing that Manasseh was the young man whom Nehemiah banished, or that he became the founder of the priesthood of the Gerizim temple, or that the temple was built either about B. C. 330, or a little earlier.

The Bible dictionaries and other books of reference give interesting details concerning the Samaritans and their worship, and especially concerning those now living at Nablous, and also concerning the Samaritan Pentateuch and the Samaritan version of it.

In John iv., 20, the woman says: "Our fathers worshiped in this mountain." We must assume that she was appealing to something that she thought would have weight, as argument, with a Jew, and therefore that the facts to which she appeals are those of Old Testament times, and not later. It was in that vicinity that Abraham built his first altar west of the Jordan (Gen. xii., 6, 7). In the mountains Ebal and Gerizim the tribes had celebrated the great solemnity of the blessing and cursing (Josh. viii., 30-35 and Deut. xxvii.—xxx.). It is possible that she had in her mind the reading of the Samaritan Pentateuch, which affirms that the altar on that occasion was built on Gerizim (not Ebal, as in the Hebrew); but even without this supposition, her claim that the fathers worshiped in that mountain ages before Jerusalem became a sanctuary of Jehovah, was well founded. Jesus did not dispute the claim, but he drew from it a very different inference from that which she intended.

In verses 25 and 42, we have an interesting glimpse at the Messianic expectations held by the Samaritans. It is worthy of notice that they are not thinking of him as a temporal prince and local deliverer, but as one who "will tell us all things," one who is "the saviour of the world." Compare with this the language attributed, in vi., 14, to certain Jews: "The Prophet, the one coming into the world," or that of John the Baptist: "The Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world," or the questions asked of John by the delegation from Jerusalem, and it becomes evident that the current expectations concerning the Messiah were at once much less definite and, in some cases at least, much more spiritual, than many of us are in the habit of supposing.

MAY 16, THE NOBLEMAN'S SON. John iv., 43-54.

MAY 23, JESUS AT THE POOL OF BETHESDA. John v., 5-18.

MAY 30, JESUS FEEDING FIVE THOUSAND. John vi., 1-21.

JUNE 6, JESUS THE BREAD OF LIFE. John vi., 22-40.

In each of the first three of these four Lessons, we find mention made of a feast, or the feast, of the Jews. This word *εορτή* with the article, means the Passover; without the article, it means either the Passover or one of the other great national festivals. In the time of Jesus these festivals were evidently in operation, and men went to them from Galilee, and even from more distant countries, and not from the vicinity of Jerusalem only. The frequency and distinctness of these allusions to the festivals in the New Testament biographies, calls attention to the comparative infrequency of allusions of this sort in the Old Testament, and is an item to be used in determining how far the festivals were actually observed, between Moses and Nehemiah.

The Sabbath question is brought to our notice in chapter v., as often elsewhere in the New Testament. The conflict exhibited is not between the teachings of Jesus and the doctrine of the Old Testament, but between the teachings of Jesus and the interpretation put upon the Old Testament by the scribes. Jesus insisted upon a beneficent, common-sense understanding of the law; the scribes insisted upon a mechanical understanding of it, considerably affected by precedents founded on previous mechanical interpretations of it. Our habit of speaking of the Sabbath doctrine of the scribes as if it were the Sabbath doctrine of the Old Testament causes great confusion in treating of these matters.

The miracle of the loaves, described in chapter vi., strikingly resembles, in many points of detail, Elisha's miracle of the loaves, 2 Kgs. iv., 42-44.

The phrase *πέραν τῆς θαλάσσης*, John vi., 1, 17, 22, 25, with the parallel phrase *πέραν τοῦ Ἰορδάνου*, John i., 28, should be studied in their parallelism with the Old Testament phrase *ebher hayyarden* in its various forms. John the evangelist uses the phrase indifferently from his own geographical point of view, at Ephesus, or wherever he resided, or from that of any of the characters in his narrative. If it is defined by the immediate context, it may mean "beyond the sea" or "beyond the Jordan," in either direction. Unless it is defined in the immediate context, it uniformly means to the east of the Jordan, and that without any reference whatever to the location of the person using the phrase. By precisely the same phrase, in the Hebrew, the Old Testament books describe the region west of the Euphrates as "beyond the river," and the country east of the Jordan as "beyond the Jordan," irrespective of the actual position of the person who makes the description. It is incorrect to translate these phrases "this side the river," "this side the Jordan," even when we know that the author wrote from the west of the Euphrates, or from the east of the Jordan, for this translation changes a well defined geographical designation into a mere descriptive phrase. Because the phrase is a geographical designation, and not merely descriptive, it would be incorrect to infer from it that the author using it lived either to the east of the Euphrates, or to the west of the Jordan. The argument from this phrase to prove that the Pentateuch was written in the country west of the Jordan, has precisely the same weight to prove that the Gospel of John was written in the same locality.

In all the lessons of this month, there are scarcely five consecutive verses which do not in some way call to mind some Old Testament phrase or fact; but the only passage in them which is commonly recognized as a quotation is in John vi., 31. It is a very simple case of citation, from Psalm lxxviii., 24, where it is an evident allusion to the accounts given of the manna, in Exodus and

Numbers. The Septuagint of the verse in the Psalm is exactly true to the Hebrew, except that it has "bread" instead of "corn." John cites verbally the words of the Septuagint, with a slight change and enlargement from the context. It will sufficiently show this, if we translate the Septuagint verse, italicising the part used by John, and putting in parentheses the word supplied by John :

"And he rained upon them manna *to eat*,
And bread (out) of (the) heaven he gave them."

A BOOK-STUDY: FIRST AND SECOND SAMUEL.

BY THE EDITOR.

I. GENERAL REMARKS.

1. The "general remarks" of the two preceding "Studies" are applicable to this "Study," viz., (1) it is intended for students who need and feel their need of help; (2) it furnishes an order of work, not an order for presenting the results of work; (3) it calls for more work than some may desire to do, and perhaps for work in which some may not be interested; (4) the helps to be used are few, the aim being to incite the student to do his own work; (5) the Revised Version should be used exclusively, except for comparison; (6) in all the work done, there should be an effort to secure a clear and well-defined idea of the *purpose* of the writer and compiler; (7) it is necessary to remember the time in which the events we study were transacted; (8) textual difficulties may be studied to advantage only by those who have a knowledge of Hebrew, still a good commentary (Kirkpatrick's) will give sufficient aid for most readers; (9) a map is an indispensable companion in work of this character; (10) it is necessary to a clear and correct understanding of what we read that we have as definitely in mind as possible the historical stand-point of the writer, speaker, or actor.

2. When we take up for consideration the name, divisions, sources, history, author, date of a certain book, we are doing the work of *Higher Critics*.¹ That student who confines his study to the text of the book, seeking to ascertain where and how mistakes have crept in, where and how words have dropped out, etc., etc., is a *Lower Critic*. The work, therefore, of this "Study" is for the most part a work of "Higher Criticism." Let not the fact that this term has been misunderstood by many writers influence us against it. Professor William Henry Green, of Princeton, is in as true a sense a "higher critic" as is Wellhausen.

3. The importance of a knowledge of at least the more general principles of *Hebrew Poetry*² cannot easily be overestimated. The careful study of half a dozen Psalms, as they are printed in the Revised Version, a comparison of the lines with each other, of the logical relation existing between them, and then a comparison of the verses in the same manner will open one's eyes, if they have not already been opened, to the essential features of Hebrew poetry. This study, short

¹ See further on this point, page 355 of this number of THE STUDENT.

² See article on "Hebrew Poetry" in Smith's *Bible Dictionary*, p. 2549; also Briggs' *Biblical Study*, pp. 248-295; Terry's *Biblical Hermeneutics*, pp. 90-103.